Kursich

(fl. c. 395)

BRIEFING

Kursich (fl. 395) was a Hun general and royal family member. He led a Hunnish army in the Hunnic invasion of Persia in 395 AD.

ETYMOLOGY

Omeljan Pritsak derived Kursich's name from a proposed Altaic root **kür* or **kür+ä*, meaning "brave, noble, powerful, universal," together with a suffix **-siġ*, meaning "like, similar to". Otto Maenchen-Helfen considered the name to be a hybrid of Turkic and another language. He took the ending -ich to be a Turkic diminutive suffix *-iq*, while he compared *kurs* to the name *Churs*, attested as the name of an Armenian prince, Ossetian *xors* and the Ias name *Horz*. Gerhard Doerfer takes the name for Hunnish but rejects attempts to etymologize it. Historian Hyun Jin Kim argued that the name was Turkic.

BIOGRAPHY

The Huns started to seriously threaten the Eastern Roman Empire in 395, crossing over the Caucasus mountains in the summer of that year. The following winter, another Hunnic force pillaged Thrace and threatened Dalmatia. The Huns then invaded Armenia, Persia and the Asian Roman provinces. Kursich and another commander, Basich, led two armies down the Euphrates, up to threatening the Sassanid Persian capital of Ctesiphon. One army was defeated by the Persians, while the other successfully retreated by Derbent Pass.

Priscus recorded that Kursich later came to the city of Rome to make an alliance. Maenchen-Helfen suggested that he and Basich came to Rome in 404 or 407, as mercenaries.

HUNNIC RAID OF 395

The Hunnic raid of 395 was an invasion by the Huns into Roman and Sasanian provinces.

Background

In 395 the Huns, led by commanders Basiq and Kursich, crossed the Don and turning southeast crossed the Caucasus. Initially, the Huns invaded the Roman regions of Sophene, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Syria, capturing and enslaving Roman subjects. The Huns then besieged the Roman fortress of Ziatha, burning it and killing and enslaving its inhabitants. The two contingents then proceeded into Persia proper.

Invasion

Basiq and Kursich led two detachments down the Euphrates, threatening the capital Ctesiphon. Upon hearing that the Sasanian army was marching against them, the Huns retreated. However, one group was overtaken, and some were killed. The Sasanians took nearly all of the booty, and freed 18,000 captives. The other group of Huns successfully retreated through the Derbent Pass.

Aftermath

Years later, the Sasanian Emperor Yazdegerd I returned the Roman prisoners taken by the Huns.